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Monday, July 10, 2006

7/9/2006 4:00:00 AM

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Back at rest

Bones of 'Billy the Kid' return to Prescott

By JOANNA DODDER The Daily Courier

The remains of John Miller, who claimed to be Billy the Kid, returned to the grounds of the Arizona Pioneers' Home Cemetery in Prescott Thursday.

So did the bones of William Hudspeth, who became caught up in the Billy the Kid legend only because he originally was buried next to Miller 69 years ago. Both Miller and Hudspeth were residents of the state-run Arizona Pioneers' Home for elderly Arizonans when they died in 1937.

Thursday's reburial was without fanfare. Pioneers' Home Superintendent Gary Olson said he never was able to find any living relatives of the two men.

A lab that's helping former New Mexico officials investigate the death of the infamous Billy the Kid mailed the bones of Miller and Hudspeth back to the Pioneers' Home.

Tom Sullivan, then sheriff of Lincoln County, N.M., and Steve Sederwall, then mayor of Capitan, N.M., decided in 2003 that they were going to try to prove whether the infamous outlaw Billy the Kid really is the one who is buried at Fort Sumner, N.M., and whether he really died at the hands of Sheriff Pat Garrett in 1881.

The men said they wanted to dig up the body at Fort Sumner, the body of Billy's mother in Silver City, N.M., and the bodies of some men who claimed to be Billy, including Miller.

So far, they've dug up only Miller and his neighbor. They said they planned to compare his DNA with DNA from blood on a bench where they believe Billy laid after Garrett shot him.



Courier/Joanna Dodder Arizona Pioneers' Home Superintendent Gary Olson talks to a backhoe operator after reburying the remains of John Miller and William Hudspeth in the unmarked cemetery plots in front of the backhoe Thursday.

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Sullivan and Sederwall have since retired from public life as elected officials, but not from public life in general. As they continue their pursuit, they continue to draw quite a bit of interest, including unwanted interest from those who think the investigation is pointless.

The attacks have led Sullivan to decide that he's less interested in talking about the investigation these days.

"We'll make a comment when the time is right," Sullivan responded when asked if the DNA results on Miller are in.

He also refused to answer other questions.

"Everything we say, then somebody comes back with some ridiculous statement," Sullivan explained.

Sullivan said in an April interview the men purposely tried to avoid publicity when they came to Prescott to exhume bones from Miller's grave last year. They didn't want another court battle like the one they faced in Silver City when they tried to dig up Billy's mother.

However, they did get permission from the Pioneers' Home superintendent who has since retired. She even joined them at the cemetery.

Numerous other people also attended the exhumation, and all apparently heard that the activity was copacetic.

The men hired Dr. Laura Fulginiti of the Maricopa County Medical Examiner's Office to help, for example.

A Yavapai County Sheriff's Office detective who stopped by to talk to Fulginiti about another case ended up providing the group with a metal detector to search for a bullet, too.

Contact the reporter at jdodder@prescottaz.com

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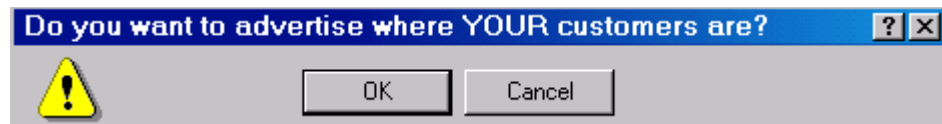
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